ENGAGING ELLs IN VERBAL INTERACTION THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CALL PRINCIPLES IN VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

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Abstract

The implementation of technology to support the language learning process has been increasing due to the needs of the current educational context and the new learning opportunities it brings to both teachers and students. Therefore, the use of platforms, software, and websites has allowed teachers to reach students, convey their lessons, interact, and provide formative and summative assessments. Moreover, integrating virtual learning scenarios into this new trend has grown increasingly as a new resource to create a safe learning environment for learners. However, computer assisted language learning (CALL) must be linked to clear principles that engage English language learners (ELLs) in their learning process and foster their oral interaction. Hence, this thesis provides a thorough understanding of CALL principles integrated into virtual learning environments (VLEs) through the design of a website where ESOL teachers can find guidance to follow these principles, engaging students, and fostering verbal participation in a virtual environment.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my lovely wife and family, who supported me with their love throughout this challenging journey.

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank Professor Paula Wilder for her guidance, support, comments, and feedback through the process of creating this thesis. Her words enlightened and encouraged me on every step of writing this research project.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The development and evolution of education have brought both teachers and students significant accomplishments and several challenges too. Technology and computers to support teachers and students' learning process have gradually modified the learning environment. However, the spread of COVID-19 brought abrupt and significant challenges to the educational community that has required alternative solutions and an open-minded mindset to hold lessons. ESOL teachers have tackled this virtual scenario by using computers to assist ELLs, yet their efforts to reach students' needs have had little impact since it has been difficult to align their lessons to ESOL standards of language use, especially concerning verbal interaction. Hence, I see the need to implement clear computer assisted language learning principles to foster verbal interaction through a website tool that benefits teachers now and in the future to reach more English language learners.

This pandemic has affected millions of learners, making teachers and institutions reinvent themselves to mitigate the pandemic's effects on the educational system. Therefore, to ensure the continuity of learning during school closures, many governments worldwide have turned to Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), asking teachers to migrate to online delivery lessons (United Nations, 2020). As a teacher, I never thought we would rely so deeply on computers and cellphones to assist students' learning process in a virtual learning environment as we do today. Hence, this uncertain scenario has modified the educational environment into a virtual learning and training setting. Christopher (2015) has defined virtual training as "facilitators and participants in the virtual classroom come together via computer in an Internet-based classroom. It is also referred to as web conferencing, synchronous learning, or a webinar" (p. 10). As a result, this virtual environment requires teachers' innovation and explicit principles to help both teachers and students ease this transition.

On the one hand, teachers have had to rethink teaching in order to learn new ways to give their instruction, create strategies to contact students, build rapport, and engage them in this new learning environment. The United Nations (2020) has asserted, "digital solutions need relevant content, adequate instructional models, effective teaching practices, and a supportive learning environment" (p. 24). Therefore, the use of platforms, software, and websites has allowed instructors to reach students, convey their lessons, interact, and provide formative and summative assessments. According to Chapman and King (2012), "other benefits include communicating with parents and students through e-mail, blogs, school websites, and forums. Teachers can post lesson plans, interventions, homework, assessment results, and announcements" (p.133). Thus, teachers find in computer assisted language learning (CALL) the best approach to tackle this adverse scenario.

On the other hand, like any other students, ELLs have been affected by these new virtual learning environments. It has been difficult for them to achieve ESOL programs' goals considering all the hardships of this situation. According to Egbert (2005), "computer technologies can help teachers create optimal learning environments in many contexts, but when planning computer-enhanced language learning activities, teachers must put learning goals ahead of technology" (p. 9). Despite the teacher's efforts to make students reach the language learning goals, students struggle to learn how to use the learning platforms, programs, software, websites, and other technology tools while trying to accomplish the ESOL language objectives. Furthermore, the lack of interaction among students and motivation to participate in the lessons make this new task even more difficult for both students and teachers. Language increases through interaction. In many classrooms, students are silent while the teacher talks. These are not effective learning environments for English learners (Short et al., 2018).

Considering this phenomenon, the main objective of this thesis project is to design a tool for ESOL teachers to help them use technology and facilitate students' language learning processes by following four key components of CALL: conditions for classroom language learning, integrating ESL standards, guidelines for technology use in educational settings, and integrating the national educational technology standards (Egbert, 2005). In this virtual learning environment, it has been difficult for ESOL teachers to give their instructions where there is little or no interaction with and among students. Hence, teachers must have access to an educational tool that guides them to design lessons where ELLs can participate and interact using the target language, instead of just posting activities and assignments on a webpage for students to develop. As a result, this thesis project aims to design a website that helps ESOL teachers follow these principles and foster students' verbal participation in a virtual environment. This website has tools, techniques, and strategies for ESOL teachers to design and deliver appealing instructions to engage students' participation and interaction.

On this website, teachers can find guidance, lesson plans, and other useful activities to foster students' interaction considering their levels. Thus, using this website, teachers can benefit from its content with strategies, techniques, materials, lesson plans, and tips to support the ELLs' learning process around, through, and with computers. Moreover, this website creates a safe virtual learning environment to implement and deliver lessons utilizing websites, platforms, and software, among other technology tools, considering students' needs. Furthermore, this tool helps teachers achieve the ESOL program goals by providing learners with opportunities to interact using the target language. My goal is for teachers to implement best practices to foster students' verbal interaction and engage students in this new virtual learning setting while helping them succeed in the language learning process.

The website's benefits and the integration of clear CALL principles into ESOL teacher lessons support both teachers and students to reach ESOL language objectives. This project also allows teachers to develop and deliver lessons to engage students and fulfill English language learners' needs in their oral interaction within this new virtual learning environment. To successfully carry out this website, I have read, compiled, and implemented thorough research to sustain and validate this project in order to help teachers engage more ELLs these days and in the future.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The implementation of computers to support language learning has increased drastically since the outbreak of COVID-19. According to The United Nations (2020), "it is essential that teachers and communities be better prepared and supported if equitable and inclusive learning, in and beyond classrooms, is to be guaranteed. Technology alone cannot guarantee good learning outcomes" (p. 23). Therefore, to assure education in distance learning, teachers and communities must be prepared to integrate and leverage technology as a tool to promote teaching and learning.

Accordingly, institutions and teachers' efforts to overcome this crisis have created new opportunities to seize computer assisted language learning (CALL) in the teaching and learning process. However, CALL's implications in a virtual learning environment require interactions, collaborations, and effective conversations to increase students' engagement, achievement, and satisfaction in the learning process (Feng et al., 2017). Therefore, the integration of CALL to support virtual learning entails the incorporation of guidelines for technology use and the national ESL and technology standards to create an optimal learning environment (Egbert, 2005). As suggested by Derbel (2002), "in their attempt to integrate technology, they [teachers] will need to make informed decisions and reconcile the different elements that determine the outcome of their experience of teaching with CALL" (p. 11). Hence, teachers must factor in CALL's basic principles when teaching ELLs in a virtual learning environment.

This chapter reviews research regarding CALL principles in ESOL virtual learning environments to engage learners in oral production. I provide a description of CALL principles and their importance in virtual learning. Likewise, I will characterize virtual learning environments and their implications in students' engagement. Finally, I will discuss the importance of oral interaction integrating ESOL learning standards in online learning.

CALL Principles

The development of the internet and the propagation of computers in schools and homes have allowed technology growth in foreign and second language instruction. Shokrpour et al. (2019) asserted that CALL is "a wide variety of applications and approaches to teaching and learning foreign languages, from the 'traditional' drill-and-practice programs that characterized CALL in the 1960s and 1970s to more recent manifestations of CALL, as used in virtual learning environments" (p. 2). Hence, CALL use software tools designed to support and promote language teaching and learning (Egbert, 2005). Nevertheless, language teachers will find themselves at a disadvantage if they are not proficient in CALL and the interconnected constraints that this scenario brings. According to Hubbard and Levy (2006), language teachers need to identify and understand the influence of authentic limitations in real education settings and be able to work creatively with them.

Similarly, Wesely and Plummer (2017) discussed in their study the importance of giving teachers clear criteria for evaluation based on CALL principles since they would likely have adapted their practice accordingly. Therefore, thorough teaching training is fundamental in order to implement this language learning approach to increase its efficacy. According to Egbert (2005), "CALL occurs in many contexts and with many diverse participants. Hence, practitioners need to be prepared to meet a variety of needs" (p. 4). Therefore, teachers must be prepared and trained to face several possible outcomes when using CALL.

Appropriately scaffolded CALL training for online instructors and teachers improves their attitudes towards new tools and skills in creating suitable CALL activities for their students (Wesely & Plummer, 2017). Feng et al. (2017) suggested in their study that there are many competencies and roles for online instructors rather than just a transmitter of knowledge. Their roles include facilitating and supporting learning and contributing to high-quality knowledge that encourages students to have friendly contributions and participation, provide assessment, feedback, and help students create relationships. Likewise, Feng et al. (2017) and Olesova et al.(2011) asserted that online teachers are looking to fulfill students' needs for a sense of presence, scaffold students' learning experience through the right amount of structure and establish more personalized communication. Consequently, Bozdoğan (2012) concluded in her study that "students perceive CALL as informative, useful, enjoyable and innovative with numerous reasons to integrate technology in their learning process and predictably in their teaching environments" (p. 70). In other words, instructors and teachers need to create and support a safe virtual learning environment with clear conditions to create an optimal classroom language learning environment.

According to Egbert (2005), the conditions to create an optimal classroom language learning environment can be characterized as:

- learners have opportunities to interact socially and negotiate meaning;
- learners interact in the target language with an authentic audience;
- learners are involved in authentic tasks;
- learners are exposed to and encouraged to produce varied and creative language;

- learners have enough time and feedback;
- learners are guided to attend mindfully to the learning process;
- learners work in an atmosphere with an ideal stress/anxiety level and;
- learners' autonomy is supported. (pp. 6-7)

Hence, teachers must fulfill these conditions in virtual learning environments to assure ELLs have a safe virtual learning experience in their learning process.

Virtual Learning Environments

Due to COVID-19, the integration of virtuality in teaching and learning is the best option to keep social distancing. According to The United Nations (2020), "in the face of global closures of educational institutions and the halting of non-formal training, there has been remarkable innovation in responses to support learning and teaching" (p 23). This virtuality refers to an unreal process but occurs in an existing system with similar dynamics and aspirations (Shahzad et al., 2020).

According to Schroeder (2008), a virtual environment is "a computer-generated display that allows or compels the user (or users) to have a sense of being present in an environment other than the one they are actually in, and to interact with that environment" (p. 2). Simirlaly, Alves et al. (2017) stated that the concept of a virtual learning environment (VLE) is a dynamic notion due to the continuous evolution of digital technologies regarding their features, potentialities, and importance in the learning process. As Lotfi and Pozveh (2019) pointed out, "this led to the asynchronous way of teaching, in which there is a time interval between teaching and learning. Though this has also become synchronous with the use of virtual applications that you can use live connection with" (p.1585). Therefore, compared to other training types, virtual classrooms offer a two-way information flow between facilitators and learners where they are physically separated and can access education through a computer or sometimes a mobile device. The materials are emailed to participants in advance or downloaded from a virtual classroom where teachers facilitate discussions, small group work in breakout rooms, polls, and lessons can vary between 60 and 90 minutes (Christopher, 2015).

In order to create this virtual learning experience, there are several resources available. The study conducted by Arora et al. (2015) asserted that commercial and open access software are accessible today. Both software satisfy the requirements for any VLE where students and teachers can upload, share documents, create content, have online discussions, quizzes, surveys, etc. Among some VL software are Blackboard, Grovo, Easy Campus, Latitud Learning, WebCT, etc. Some of the open software are ATutor, Claroline, Moodle, Dokeos, ILIAS, and Chamilo. Arora et al. (2015) analyzed five free software considering some of their features. The software were: Chamilo, ILIAS, Forma.LMS, Opigno, and Opensis. The researches focused on ease to download, installation, customization, accessibility, searching facilities, platform to run software requirements, friendliness, among other features. As a result, Arora et al. (2015) asserted that these software are flexible, customizable, and can be modified at many levels offering advantages over commercial VLE software.

Consequently, teachers and facilitators must consider some critical characteristics to create an interactive virtual classroom. According to Christopher (2015), there are eight key features to promote and facilitate teacher and student interaction: content sharing, screen sharing, audio, chat, pointing tools, polls, instant feedback, and breakout rooms. Moreover, teachers and facilitators must think holistically when planning and developing materials for a virtual session and consider including presentation slides, videos, exercises, interaction, participants' workbooks, and facilitator instructions. Therefore, ESOL teachers need to determine and analyze the factors that affect students' engagement and motivation in virtual learning environments through the implementation of CALL and their implications on their language learning process.

Students' Engagement in VLE

Learning requires powerful tools to motivate students mentally and emotionally, either physically or in a virtual learning environment. According to the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine (2004), "improving meaningful learning depends on the ability of educators to engage the imagination of students, to involve them in new realms of knowledge, building on what they already know and believe" (p. 14). Similarly, Meyer (2014) asserted that engagement is the product of the students' involvement in learning through participation, collaboration, or solving problems and contributes to their learning and their participation in course activities. In that regard, technology and software have evolved into applications oriented to students. The purpose of computers and the internet has been expanded to provide both ELLs and teachers diverse forms of feedback, authentic materials, several multimedia resources, learning accommodations, among other virtually unlimited uses (Kim, 2008).

Technology use affects students' motivation and interest in language acquisition; therefore, ESOL teachers have used technology to enhance second language learning (ChanLin, 2019). Hence, the best language learning process is when students learn by doing, and they are actively engaged as listeners, speakers, readers, and writers (Short et al., 2018). Consequently, Kim (2008) asserted that using computers can increase students' communication quality and enhance their learning engagement. For instance, using online discussion promotes students' meaning-making process and improves communicative skills to help their classmates understand their statements. Therefore, teachers must offer students opportunities to be more engaged in the learning process. According to Egbert and Borysenko (2018), students can get involved in VLE through several ways:

- kinaesthetic involvement, which embraces control and movement in a VLE;
- spatial involvement, which implies exploring the VLE;
- shared involvement, which spans social co-presence cooperation, collaboration, and competition;
- narrative involvement, which signifies creating a story and/or a project;
- affective involvement, which contains a user's emotional engagement; and
- ludic involvement, which comprises engagement with a variety of options, choices, and outcomes. (p. 107)

These involvement approaches must be oriented throughout well-designed courses that enable students to interact and express their true selves. As Farrell and Brunton (2020) asserted, "online student engagement can be supported by a well-designed course which promotes interaction and social presence and creates a clear, purposeful learning journey" (p. 3). On the one hand, interaction enables valuable language input and language production. Therefore, a purposeful language learning process must promote production through opportunities for intentional cognition, appropriate support, scaffolding, and feedback on students' production (Egbert, 2005). On the other hand, social presence requires students to project and perceive themselves in VLE by group cohesion, open communication, emotional expression, and environmental acclimation. Hence, for students to be ready for this kind of engagement, teachers need to help students become familiar with the online setting and enable them to work with the tools offered in the online learning environment (Feng et al., 2017).

Likewise, Hwang et al. (2014) concluded that students believe that the best way to learn English is through a CALL environment since there is a positive relationship between reduced learning anxiety and the use of a multimedia atmosphere. Moreover, CALL creates a positive and relaxed English learning environment that reduces learning anxiety and motivates students' learning process. Hence, ESOL teachers must try to change their traditional teaching style by integrating CALL in their teaching practices to increase students' motivation and enhance students' stimulation and make them more attracted to learning. As a result, teaching practices using CALL can help students practice and improve their linguistic skills by interacting and using the target language for various purposes following the ESOL standards.

Oral Interaction in VLE

Oral interaction is critical to accomplish ESOL standards, and it may occur in any context, by any means, even though in a virtual one. According to Herrera and Murry (2016), "environmental exposure to the target language and social interaction in that language is sufficient to prompt a learner's innate ability to develop the capacity to comprehend and produce that language" (p. 199). Herrera Diaz and Gonzalez Miy (2017) stated that oral skills are divided into two complementary skills: listening and speaking. Hence, to speak and listen in a second language, learners need both linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in order to comprehend and produce the language. Students must understand language functions, such as personal narratives, greeting, informing, questioning, clarifying, and interrupting (Egbert, 2005). Likewise, Lamy (2004) asserted that "interacting means exercising competence not only in matters of language but also over all the tools brought into play in the particular communication context" (p. 523). In that regard, computer-mediated communication is enabled when learners have access to communication contexts with beneficial types of collaborative interaction such as chat rooms that allow them to engage in new computer-based interaction forms (Peterson 2010).

Additionally, well-planned CALL activities can support oral interaction in several ways. Short et al. (2018) declared that "effective teachers understand that language development involves active learning. Students construct language; they learn to use language in the way that is used when others communicate with them. Watching and overhearing speakers are not effective ways to learn language" (p. 24). Because through oral interaction, students establish communication with partners and can co-construct, verify understanding and ask for clarification (Short et al., 2018). Likewise, Tusing and Berge (2010) stated that "students can achieve similar degrees of oral proficiency in both distance and face-to-face format if appropriate opportunities for synchronous interpersonal communication are provided as part of the course design" (p. 13). Egbert (2005) asserted that learners could speak around the computer, through the computer, and with the computer, using certain kinds of software. When planning tasks around the computers, teachers can design lessons using several content websites or software that enable students to interact with one another. Moreover, through computers, teachers can design assignments where students can interact with more fluent speakers around the world, synchronous or asynchronous. Students can also practice speaking and listening by recording video or audio segments. As a result, students can develop speaking skills through direct instruction or by participating in content or whole tasks whenever teachers offer them opportunities to participate in various authentic contexts (Egbert, 2005).

Thus, all learners benefit and leverage the advantages of VLEs since they can improve the effectiveness and efficiency of students' learning process (Guerrad, 2007). Consequently, Asim et al. (2020) declared, "teachers must become acquainted with students' backgrounds, academic levels, and learning preferences or styles, as these factors can help or hinder a student's ability to learn" (p. 19). Therefore, teachers must differentiate online instruction accordingly to fulfill individual needs and promote communication in social and academic settings. Egbert (2005) stated that teachers might implement some techniques and tools to accomplish the ESOL conditions:

- letting students play roles that encourage active learning;
- providing a variety of opportunities for learners to interact with native English speakers;
- focusing on language use instead of language study;
- using higher-order thinking skills;
- employing different media;
- encouraging meaningful language use;
- providing flexible timing for tasks;
- promoting a variety of sources of feedback and prompting, including other students;
- offering adequate information or research resources;
- seizing upon opportunities to assist learners in making crucial choices in the learning process. (p. 8)

Therefore, by implementing these tools and techniques, ESOL teachers can fulfill student's individual needs and accomplish ESOL standards to promote communication in VLE.

Conclusion

Implementing computers to assist language learning enables teachers and students to overcome the uncertain scenario that COVID-19 has brought to education. CALL and VLEs create myriad opportunities for ELLs to be engaged, interact and develop speaking skills necessary to accomplish the ESOL standards. These conclusions are supported by several research projects and experts in the area who assert CALL benefits in VLEs. However, teachers must be prepared and adequately trained to follow the CALL principles and leverage the potential of VLEs in online instruction by creating a safe environment where students can improve their language proficiency and interact socially through technology use. Therefore, the development of a website tool where teachers find guidance, tips, and resources is necessary to assure the effectiveness and efficacy in the implementation of CALL in VLEs.

Chapter 3: Project Design

In this chapter, I explain the rationale of creating a website for ESOL teachers to promote oral interaction in VLEs. This website aims to help teachers during the current migration to online teaching and in the future use of technology to facilitate students' language learning process through the implementation of CALL principles that encompass four key components: conditions for classroom language learning, integrating ESL standards, guidelines for technology use in educational settings, and integrating the national educational technology standards (Egbert, 2005).

On the one hand, classroom language learning conditions should be ubiquitous in the learning process and support any language lesson. According to Egbert (2005), "any language lesson should support conditions for optimal classroom language learning environments regardless of the tools used" (p. 5). Thus, online ESL instructors and teachers must guarantee to fulfill these conditions by creating an online experience for students that ensure ESLs feel safe and engage in the VLE experience. Short et al. (2018) stated that teachers create conditions for language learning when they:

- promote an emotionally positive and organized classroom, with attention to reducing students' anxiety and developing trust;
- demonstrate expectations of success for all learners; and

- plan instruction to enhance and support students' motivation for language learning. (pp. 40-42)

Based on these conditions for language learning, this website project presents and provides teachers with some free access software platforms where teachers can make decisions regarding their features, advantages, and disadvantages in order to create a safe online learning environment.

On the other hand, the integration of ESL standards is essential to ensure students' interaction and communication in the target language. According to Short (2000), there are nine content ESOL standards:

1. students will use English to participate in social interaction;
2. students will interact in, through, and with spoken and written English for personal expression and enjoyment;
3. students will use learning strategies to extend their communicative competences
4. students will use English to interact in the classroom;
5. students will use English to obtain, process, construct, and provide subject matter information in spoken and written form;
6. students will use appropriate learning strategies to construct and apply academic knowledge;
7. students will use appropriate language variety, register, and genre according to audience, purpose, and setting;
8. students will use nonverbal communication appropriate to audience purpose and setting; and

9. students will use appropriate learning strategies to extend their sociolinguistic and sociocultural competence. (pp. 3-4)

These standards are evident throughout this website's design. Its content is organized in six navigation links: home page, free software platforms for VLEs, communication-community and support, teacher content creation, students' interaction and creation, and lesson plans integration. By going to these links, teachers find easy access to platforms, apps, other websites, online tools, and lesson plans to create or adjust their lessons considering ESOL standards and students' needs.

Finally, the website presents guidance for technology use and the integration of the national educational technology standards. When planning instructions implementing CALL, teachers must factor in technology use and how it supports learning effectively. Egbert (2005) presented five technology guidelines for teachers to follow:

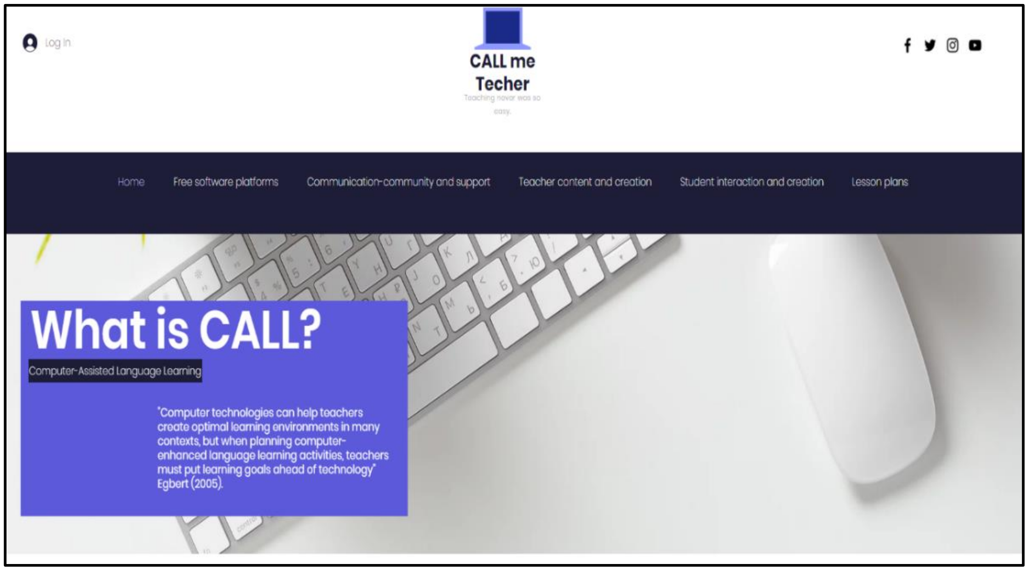
1. use technology to support the pedagogical goals of the class and curriculum;
2. make technology accessible to all learners;
3. use the technology as a tool;
4. use technology effectively; and
5. use technology efficiently. (p.12)

Therefore, on the website, teachers can find content tools that enable the integration of these guidelines. They will have access to two lesson plans that incorporate technological tools and standards to accomplish content and language objectives, promote students' engagements, and foster oral interaction in VLEs.

Chapter 4: The Project

The present project is a design of an educational website that helps ESOL teachers follow CALL principles and foster students' verbal participation in virtual environments. On this website, teachers can find several technological tools such as platforms, software, and apps with guidance and lesson plans, to create and deliver lessons to foster students' interaction. Thus, using this website, teachers can benefit from its content with strategies, techniques, materials, lesson plans, and tips to support the ELLs' learning process around, through, and with computers.

This website's name is "CALL me Teacher: Teaching never was so easy" (Figure 4.1), and the website address is https://javiervivasdionici.wixsite.com/callmeteacher.


Log In
CALL me Techer
Teaching never was so easy.
Home
Free software platforms
Communication-community and support
Teacher content and creation
Student interaction and creation
Lesson plans
What is CALL?
Computer-Assisted Language Learning

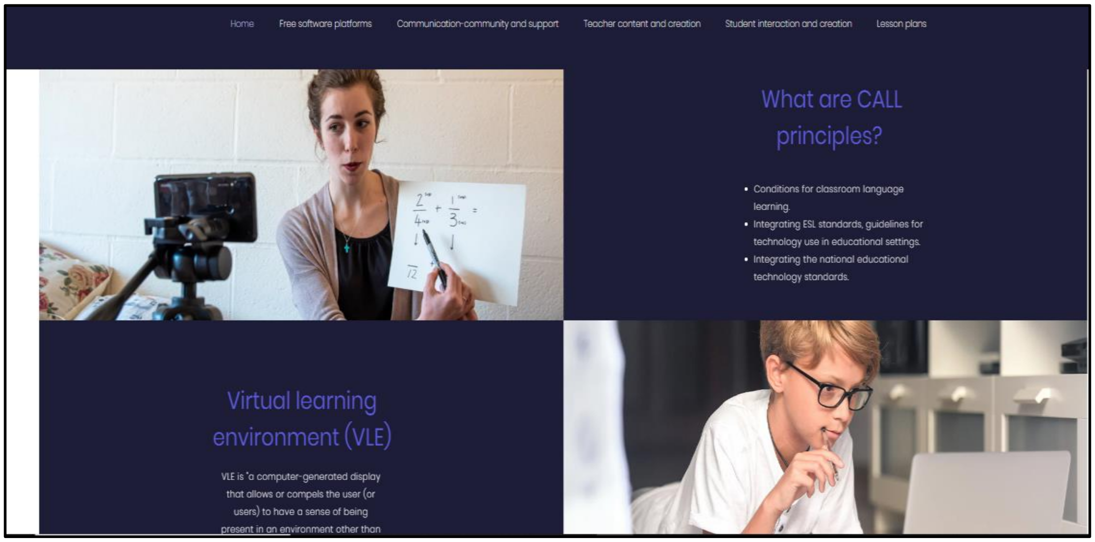
"Computer technologies can help teachers create optimal learning environments in many contexts, but when planning computer-enhanced language learning activities, teachers must put learning goals ahead of technology" Egbert (2005).

Figure 4.1 Main menu

In the main menu, teachers will find six links: home page, free software platforms for VLEs, communication-community and support, teacher content creation, students' interaction and creation, and lesson plans that encompass CALL principles.

Section One: Home Page

The first link is the **"Home page"** (Figure 4.2). On this page, teachers will find a CALL definition with an explaining video, what CALL principles are, what VLE is, engagement and interaction, and the website's purpose.


Home
Free software platforms
Communication-community and support
Teacher content and creation
Student interaction and creation
Lesson plans

What are CALL principles?

- Conditions for classroom language learning.
- Integrating ESL standards, guidelines for technology use in educational settings.
- Integrating the national educational technology standards.

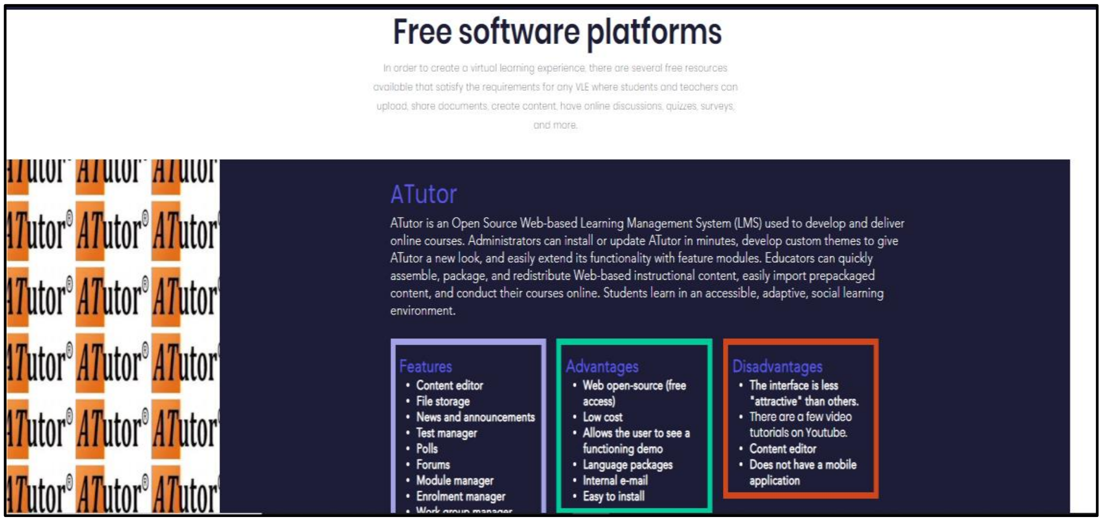
Virtual learning environment (VLE)

VLE is "a computer-generated display that allows or compels the user (or users) to have a sense of being present in an environment other than

Figure 4.2: Home page

Section two: Free Software Platforms

In the second link called **"Free software platforms"** (Figure 4.3), teachers will find three free software platforms (Atutors, Moddle, and Claroline) to download. This section presents a short description of each platform, its features, advantages, and disadvantages. This link will help teachers make the best choice to create a safe VLE environment where students and teachers can upload, download, share documents, and create discussions, quizzes, etc.



Free software platforms

In order to create a virtual learning experience, there are several free resources available that satisfy the requirements for any VLE where students and teachers can upload, share documents, create content, have online discussions, quizzes, surveys, and more.

ATutor

ATutor is an Open Source Web-based Learning Management System (LMS) used to develop and deliver online courses. Administrators can install or update ATutor in minutes, develop custom themes to give ATutor a new look, and easily extend its functionality with feature modules. Educators can quickly assemble, package, and redistribute Web-based instructional content, easily import prepackaged content, and conduct their courses online. Students learn in an accessible, adaptive, social learning environment.

Features
- Content editor
- File storage
- News and announcements
- Test manager
- Polls
- Forums
- Module manager
- Enrolment manager
- Work group manager

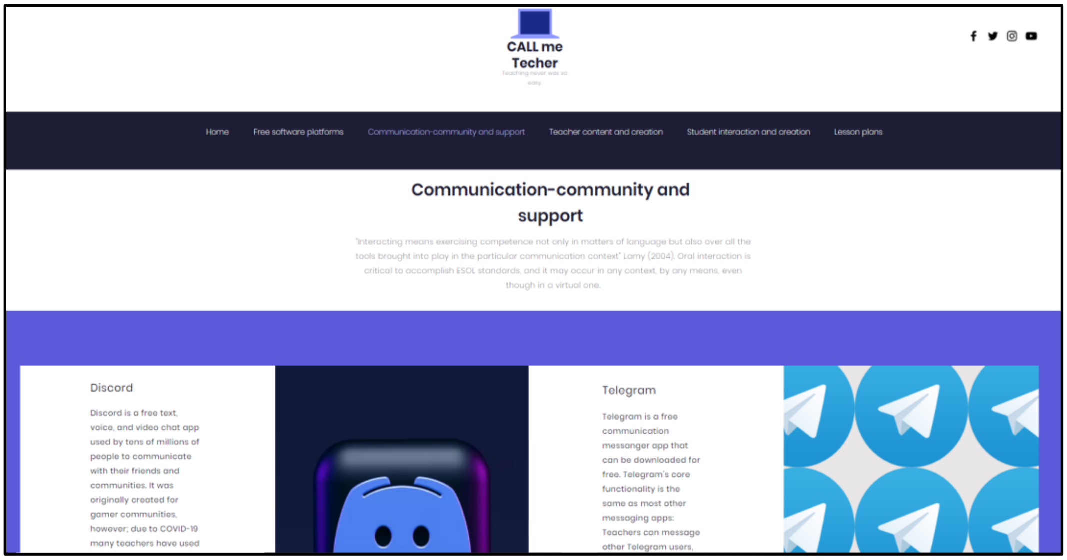
Advantages
- Web open-source (free access)
- Low cost
- Allows the user to see a functioning demo
- Language packages
- Internal e-mail
- Easy to install

Disadvantages
- The interface is less "attractive" than others.
- There are a few video tutorials on Youtube.
- Content editor
- Does not have a mobile application

Figure 4.3: Free software platforms

Section Three: Communication-Community and Support

The third link is called **"Communication-community and support"** (Figure 4.4). On this webpage, teachers will find three free platforms that will enable teachers and students to communicate and interact (Discord, Telegram, and Google Meet). There is a brief explanation of each platform and how these can be used to support a VLE. On the same web page, teachers will also find the link to join ePals community, Slack to create channels with students and other teachers. Finally, there is an explanation and link to download and use Loom. This technological tool allows teachers and students to record and share videos using their microphones, camera, and desktop (Figure 4.5).


CALL me
Techer
Teaching never was so easy.
Home
Free software platforms
Communication-community and support
Teacher content and creation
Student interaction and creation
Lesson plans

Communication-community and support

'Interacting means exercising competence not only in matters of language but also over all the tools brought into play in the particular communication context' Lamy (2004). Oral interaction is critical to accomplish ESOL standards, and it may occur in any context, by any means, even though in a virtual one.

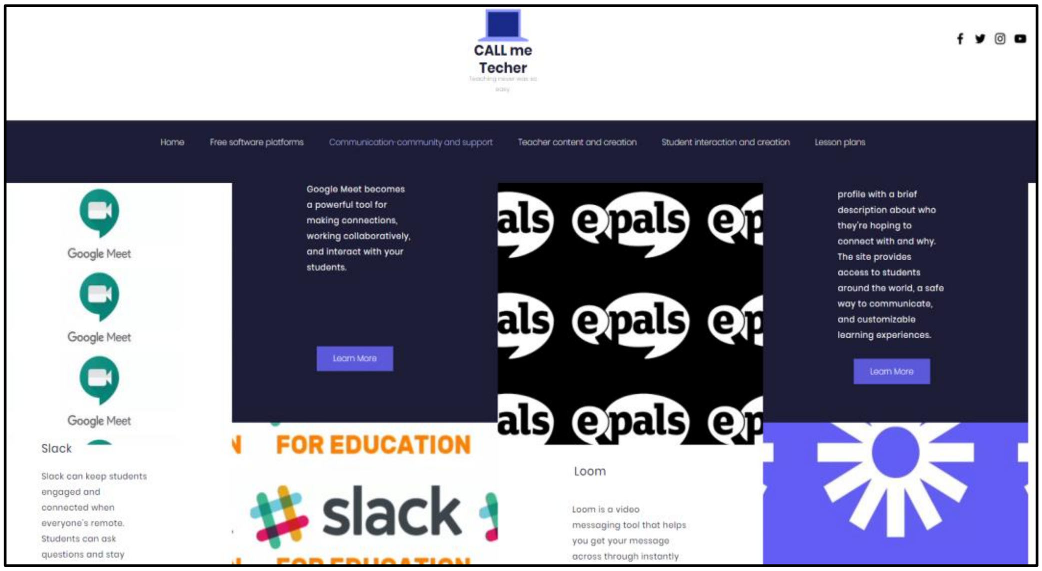
Discord

Discord is a free text, voice, and video chat app used by tens of millions of people to communicate with their friends and communities. It was originally created for gamer communities, however; due to COVID-19 many teachers have used

Telegram

Telegram is a free communication messanger app that can be downloaded for free. Telegram's core functionality is the same as most other messaging apps: Teachers can message other Telegram users,

Figure 4.4: Communication-community and support



Google Meet becomes a powerful tool for making connections, working collaboratively, and interact with your students.

profile with a brief description about who they're hoping to connect with and why. The site provides access to students around the world, a safe way to communicate, and customizable learning experiences.

Slack

Slack can keep students engaged and connected when everyone's remote. Students can ask questions and stay

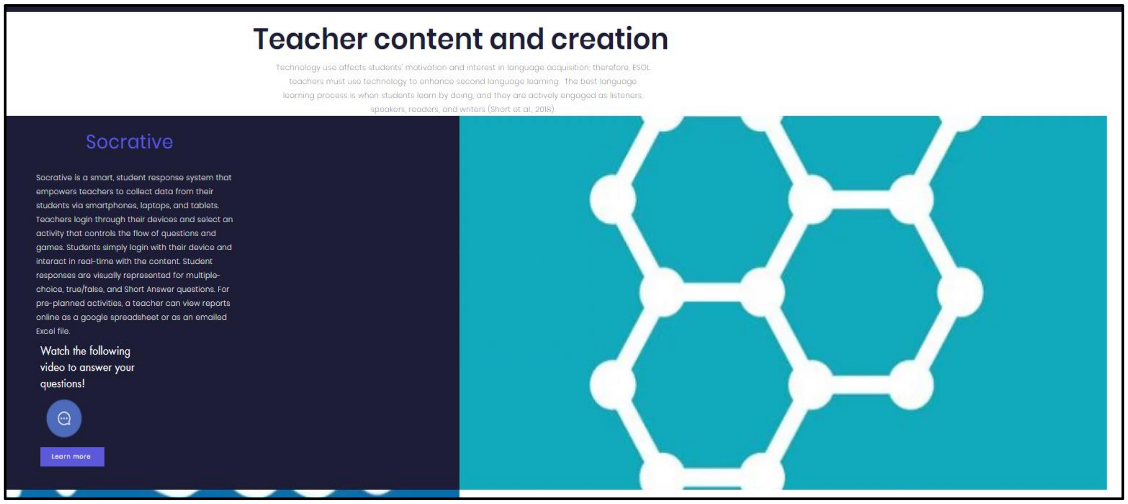
Loom

Loom is a video messaging tool that helps you get your message across through instantly

Figure 4.5: ePals, Slack, and Loom

Section Four: Teacher Content and Creation

The fourth section of this website is **"Teacher content and creation"** (Figure 4.6). On this link, teachers will find five different technological tools to post and create content to engage students and promote interaction. Each tool has a brief explanation, a tutorial or explanation video, and the corresponding link to go to the site.



Teacher content and creation

Technology use affects students' motivation and interest in language acquisition; therefore, ESOL teachers must use technology to enhance second language learning. The best language learning process is when students learn by doing, and they are actively engaged as listeners, speakers, readers, and writers (Short et al., 2018).

Socrative

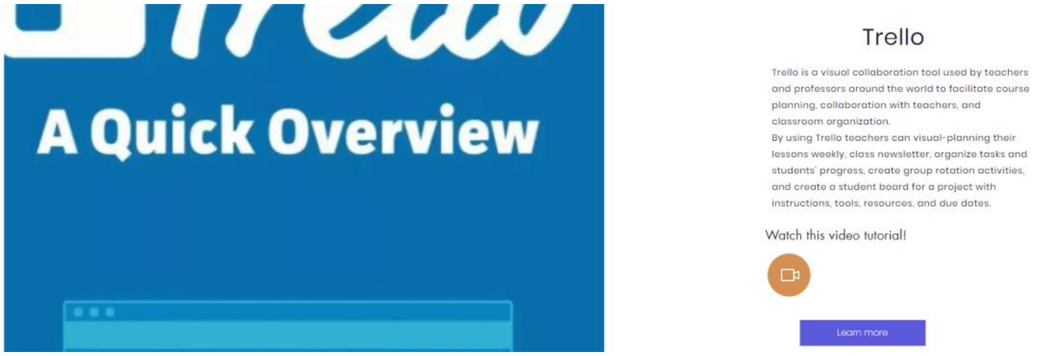
Socrative is a smart, student response system that empowers teachers to collect data from their students via smartphones, laptops, and tablets. Teachers login through their devices and select an activity that controls the flow of questions and games. Students simply login with their device and interact in real-time with the content. Student responses are visually represented for multiple-choice, true/false, and Short Answer questions. For pre-planned activities, a teacher can view reports online as a google spreadsheet or as an emailed Excel file.

Watch the following video to answer your questions!

Figure 4.6: Teacher content and creation

The first platform is "Socrative" (See figure 4.6), a technological tool that allows teachers to design appealing lessons with different participation modes, quizzes, and games to motivate students to participate. Teachers find a video tutorial link and a button that directs to the website.

The second platform is called "Trello" (Figure 4.7). This visual collaboration platform enables teachers to design lessons, embed visual material, attach documents, create rotation group activities, or visually organize tasks and students' progress. Teachers will find a video tutorial link and a link that redirects them to sign in for free on its website.



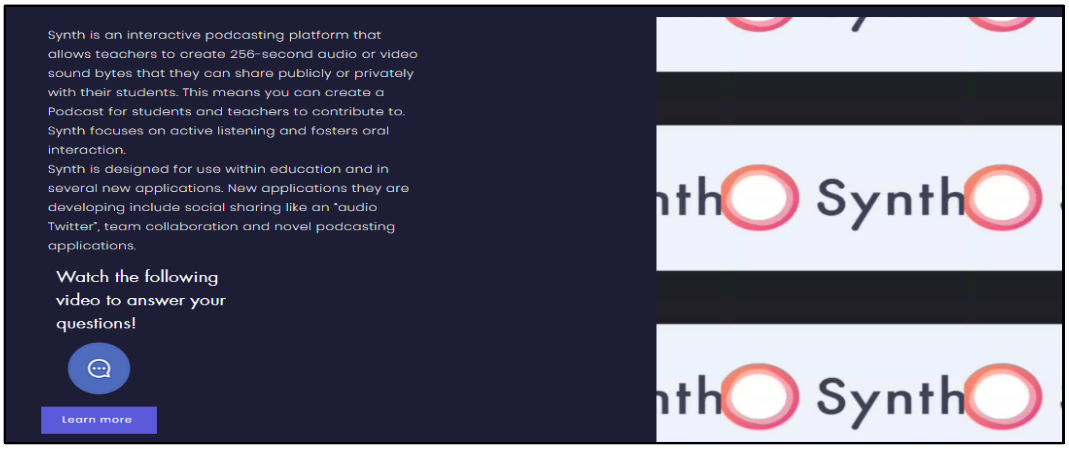
Trello

Trello is a visual collaboration tool used by teachers and professors around the world to facilitate course planning, collaboration with teachers, and classroom organization.
By using Trello teachers can visual-planning their lessons weekly, class newsletter, organize tasks and students' progress, create group rotation activities, and create a student board for a project with instructions, tools, resources, and due dates.

Watch this video tutorial!

Figure 4.7: Trello

The third platform is called "Synth" (Figure 4.8). This free podcast creator platform allows teachers to record audio instructions and create podcasts. With this tool, teachers and students can collaborate on the same podcast and share their creations with others fostering listening and oral interaction. There are a video tutorial button and a link to sign in on the platform.

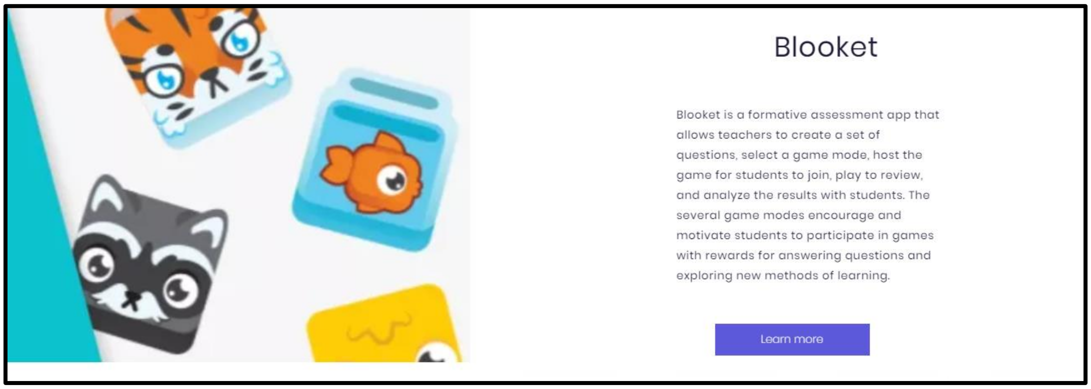


Synth is an interactive podcasting platform that allows teachers to create 256-second audio or video sound bytes that they can share publicly or privately with their students. This means you can create a Podcast for students and teachers to contribute to. Synth focuses on active listening and fosters oral interaction.
Synth is designed for use within education and in several new applications. New applications they are developing include social sharing like an "audio Twitter", team collaboration and novel podcasting applications.

Watch the following video to answer your questions!

Figure 4.8: Synth

The fourth app is called "Blooket" (Figure 4.9). This interactive formative assessment platform enables teachers to assess students by creating question sets to be played in different game modes where students play, interact, and learn. Teachers will find a link button to sign in for free.

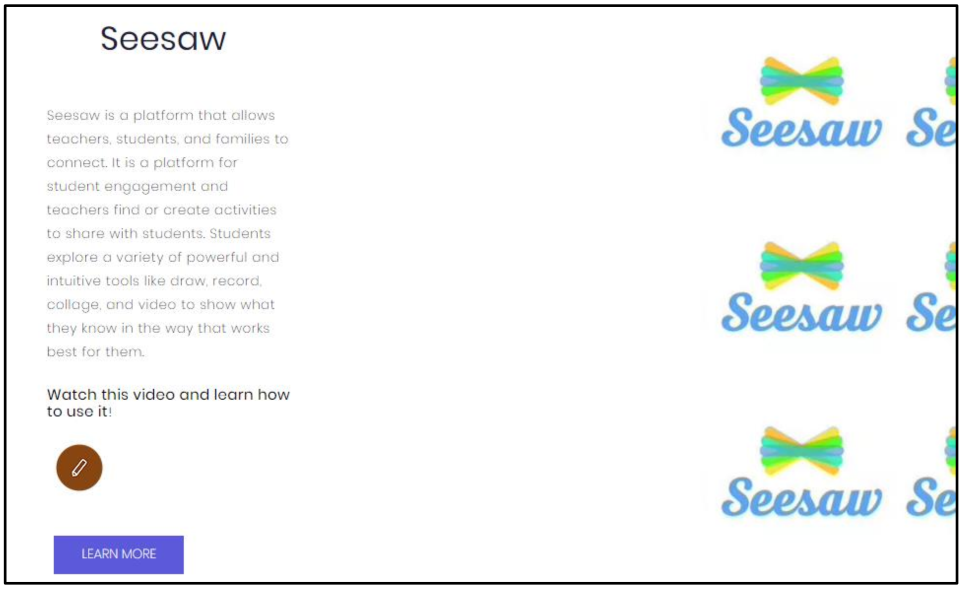


Blooket

Blooket is a formative assessment app that allows teachers to create a set of questions, select a game mode, host the game for students to join, play to review, and analyze the results with students. The several game modes encourage and motivate students to participate in games with rewards for answering questions and exploring new methods of learning.

Figure 4.9: Blooket

Finally, the last platform is called "Seesaw" (Figure 4.10). With this platform, teachers, students, and families can connect to see students' process and progress. Teachers can design engaging lessons that allow students to create and share content by recording audio videos, showing, and drawing. Teachers will find a video tutorial link and a button to go to the website.



Seesaw

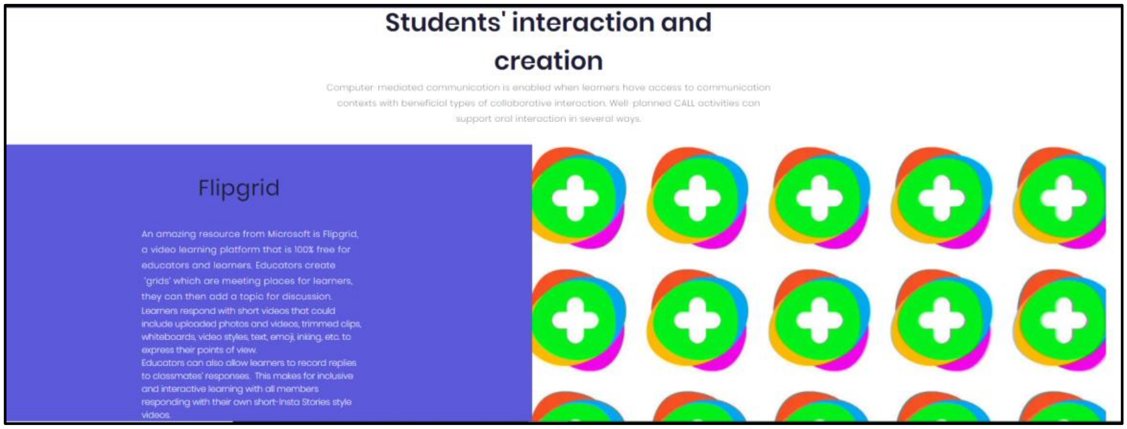
Seesaw is a platform that allows teachers, students, and families to connect. It is a platform for student engagement and teachers find or create activities to share with students. Students explore a variety of powerful and intuitive tools like draw, record, collage, and video to show what they know in the way that works best for them.

Watch this video and learn how to use it!

Figure 4.10: Seesaw

Section Five: Students interaction and Creation

This section is called **"Students' interaction and creation"** (Figure 4.11). In this section, teachers will find four different platforms and software for students to interact and create content orally. These four technological tools require students and teachers to sign in and create their own accounts.



Students' interaction and creation

Computer mediated communication is enabled when learners have access to communication contexts with beneficial types of collaborative interaction. Well planned CALL activities can support oral interaction in several ways.

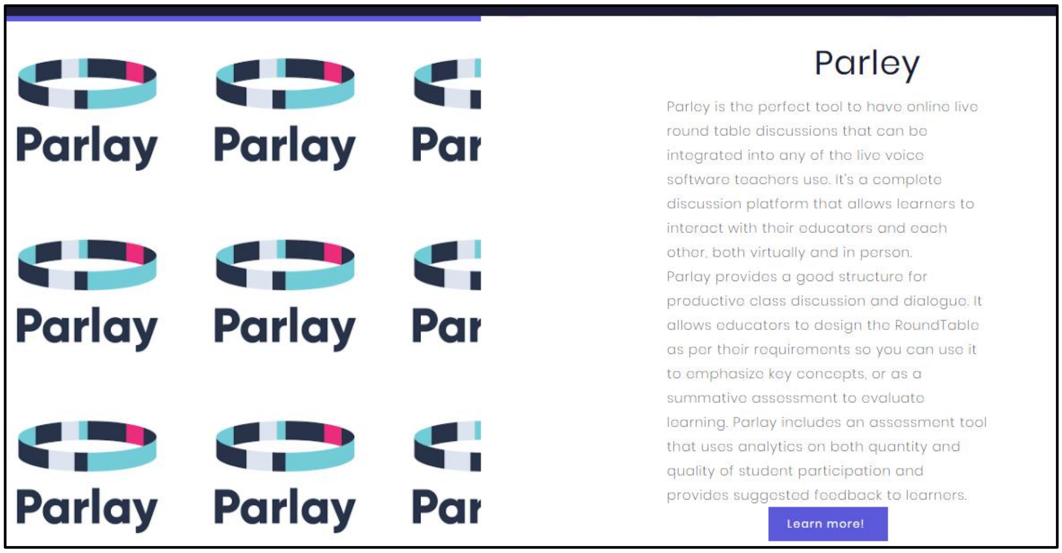
Flipgrid

An amazing resource from Microsoft is Flipgrid, a video learning platform that is 100% free for educators and learners. Educators create 'grids' which are meeting places for learners, they can then add a topic for discussion. Learners respond with short videos that could include uploaded photos and videos, trimmed clips, whiteboards, video styles, text, emoji, inking, etc. to express their points of view.
Educators can also allow learners to record replies to classmates' responses. This makes for inclusive and interactive learning with all members responding with their own short-Insta Stories style videos.

Figure 4.11: Students' interaction and creation

The first app is "Flipgrid"(See figure 4.11). By using this platform, students can record videos, comment on their classmates' videos, create replies, and even create classroom discussion topics. Teachers will find a link button to sign in for free.

The second free platform is called "Parley" (Figure 4.12). On this platform, students can join round table discussions that the teacher moderates. This is a useful technological tool that fosters students' oral interaction and engagement in VLE since it provides the elements to carry out organized, planned, and interactive round table discussions. To use this platform, teachers need first to create an account to explore the features of the platform, create new round table discussions, add students, or explore lessons in the universal library.



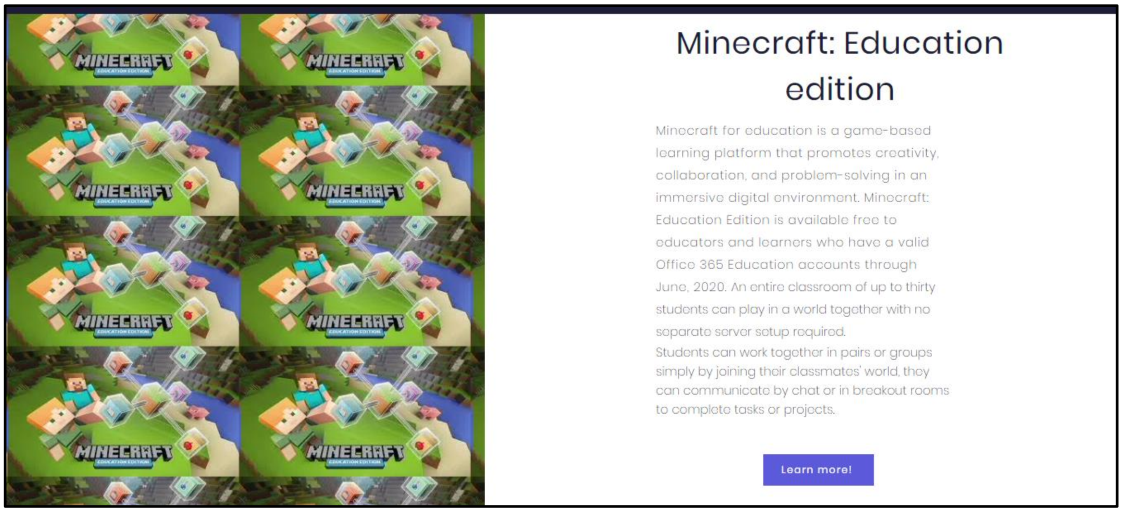
Parley

Parley is the perfect tool to have online live round table discussions that can be integrated into any of the live voice software teachers use. It's a complete discussion platform that allows learners to interact with their educators and each other, both virtually and in person.
Parlay provides a good structure for productive class discussion and dialogue. It allows educators to design the RoundTable as per their requirements so you can use it to emphasize key concepts, or as a summative assessment to evaluate learning. Parlay includes an assessment tool that uses analytics on both quantity and quality of student participation and provides suggested feedback to learners.

Figure 4.12: Parley

The third platform is "Synth" (See figure 4.8). This platform can be used for both teachers and students. The platform's features allow students to sign in quickly where they can create 256-second podcasts about any topic worked in class. Students can also comment or collaborate with their classmates in their podcasts. This is a great tool to boost oral interaction and listening skills.

The fourth and last platform is "Minecraft Education Edition" (Figure 4.13). This is an educational version of the video game that promotes creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving in a VLE. On this VLE, students have the opportunity to chat and interact with other players as they follow the teachers' instructions to complete tasks or quests. This is a free tool for students who have an institutional Office 365 account that can be linked to any voice message software or platform used for communication.



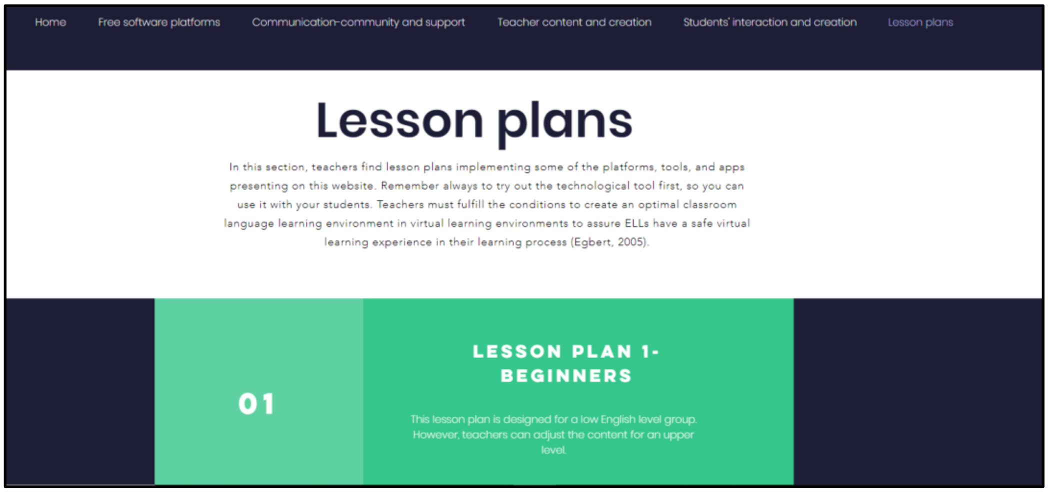
Minecraft: Education edition

Minecraft for education is a game-based learning platform that promotes creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving in an immersive digital environment. Minecraft: Education Edition is available free to educators and learners who have a valid Office 365 Education accounts through June, 2020. An entire classroom of up to thirty students can play in a world together with no separate server setup required.
Students can work together in pairs or groups simply by joining their classmates' world, they can communicate by chat or in breakout rooms to complete tasks or projects.

Figure 4.13: Minecraft Education Edition

Section Six: Lesson Plans

The last section on this website is called **"Lesson Plans"** (Figure 4.14). Teachers can find two lesson plans for beginners (See Appendix A: Lesson Plan 1) and intermediate students (See Appendix B: Lesson Plan 2). These two lesson plans are designed to promote oral interaction in VLE, implementing some of the technological tools showcased throughout the website and integrating CALL principles. Teachers must explore the tools in advance to ensure the success of the outcomes.


Home
Free software platforms
Communication-community and support
Teacher content and creation
Students' interaction and creation
Lesson plans

Lesson plans

In this section, teachers find lesson plans implementing some of the platforms, tools, and apps presenting on this website. Remember always to try out the technological tool first, so you can use it with your students. Teachers must fulfill the conditions to create an optimal classroom language learning environment in virtual learning environments to assure ELLs have a safe virtual learning experience in their learning process (Egbert, 2005).

01

LESSON PLAN 1-
BEGINNERS

This lesson plan is designed for a low English level group. However, teachers can adjust the content for an upper level.

Figure 4.14: Lesson Plans

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The technological development of education has indicated a new path for teaching and learning. The imminent challenges teachers and students have faced recently have created limitless opportunities to change and improve teaching and learning. By developing this research project, I realized the potential of technological devices and virtual learning scenarios in students' language learning process where teachers' innovation and students' resilience play an essential role in adapting and embrace new ways of teaching and learning.

The application of CALL principles to create and implement lessons must be supported with software, platforms, websites, and other tools that enable students' engagement and interaction. For this reason, I have created a website where teachers find some technological tools to support their lessons in a virtual learning environment following the ESOL standards. By exploring this website, teachers find guidance to create appealing content to implement best practices that foster students' participation, interaction, and creativity. Therefore, teachers' will to explore and innovate new ways to deliver their lessons plays a significant role whenever they want to support ELLs' learning process, creating opportunities for students to improve their language and technological skills by interacting or creating their own content. Likewise, teachers can create a safe virtual learning environment by implementing some of the tools presented on this website to foster students' verbal interaction and engage them in new virtual learning settings.

Although it might seem challenging to dive into technology, the current worldwide situation and the need for new educational settings require teachers to be bold, resourceful, and creative in exploring new ways to convey their lessons and support their students during the process. During this research project, I could reflect on the responsibility I have as a teacher to keep updated and willing to explore new technological tools to be implemented in the classroom either physically or virtually. Moreover, due to the spread of COVID-19, teachers and institutions have reinvented themselves to mitigate the pandemic's effects on the educational system looking for new ways of teaching and expanding their knowledge of technological tools used in education. However, teacher training and professional development in the use of software, platforms, webpages, and apps for educational purposes must be integrated on a regular basis as part of the teaching and learning process.

I hope this project guides ESOL teachers who try to integrate technology, engage students, and promote verbal interaction into their lessons either in a virtual learning environment or a physical one. My goal with this website is that teachers can easily find, explore, and implement some of the software, platforms, websites, and apps presented there, following the principles of using computers to assist language learning either in the current context or in the future.

In order for this website to keep growing and developing, it is necessary to integrate platforms, websites, and other apps that foster the integration of writing and reading skills for teaching and learning purposes. This integration, combined with the tools already presented on this website, will help ESOL teachers to develop a comprehensive development of the four basic language skills into a collaborative virtual community.

Appendices

Appendix A: Lesson Plan 1

Subject: Getting to know each other	Central Focus: Present simple/ Personal information
Common Core/Essential Standard Objective: Students will use English to obtain, process, construct and provide subject matter information in spoken and written form.	Date submitted: Date taught:
Daily Lesson Objective: I can tell my personal information and ask my classmates about their personal information I can ask and answer questions using the Present simple structure and the verb to Be	
21st Century Skills: I can record a video of myself using Flipgrid I can record a video of my screen using Loom	Academic Language Demand (Language Function and Vocabulary): • Language functions: Asking and answering personal information. • Verb to Be – Present Simple
Prior Knowledge: Numbers and WH questions	

Activity	Description of Activities and Setting	Time
1. Engage	The teacher must use a voice/message platform to develop the lesson. The teacher will say the answer to personal questions, and students must figure out what the questions are; then, they must ask the question in the present simple tense. Students can take turns to participate using the reactions tools offered on the platform: • My name is Javier • I am thirty-three years old • I am from Colombia • My last name is Vivas • I like basketball • I go to the movies • My favorite color is blue	5 minutes
2. Explore	Design a set of questions using www.blooket.com to review personal information questions using the verb to Be, WH questions, and present simple tense. Teachers must create an account and log in. They must choose a game mode and run the game. Battle Royal is a great way to play Vs. so students can compete among them. The teacher can give rewards to the best players.	12 minutes

3. Explain	Teachers can review with students the results of the game. Then they can go together over the questions to ensure students' understanding.	10 minutes
4. Elaborate	**First activity** Students are going to record a video using Flipgrid (teachers must create an account to see the topic) https://flipgrid.com/b890be3e where they will answer the following questions: 1. What's your first name? 2. What's your last name? 3. How old are you? 4. What's your favorite food? 5. What is your favorite animal? 4. What do you like to do on weekends? 5. What time do you get up in the morning? 6. What time do you go to bed? Go over the questions and model the pronunciation and the grammar structure to ensure students' understanding. **Second activity** Divide the class into groups of three or four using the breakout room feature. Then, ask students to interview one member of	15-20 minutes

<table>
<tr>
<td colspan="2"></td>
<td>the group. To record the interviews, assign one student who will record the screen using www.loom.com (teachers and students can sign in using their Microsoft or Gmail accounts). The assigned student will record the screen as their classmates are asking each other the questions.
Go over the app to model students how to record the screen and share the videos.

As an exit ticket, the teacher can ask students' impressions of using the two apps. Try to get positive and negative comments about the activities and apps.</td>
<td>20-25 minutes

10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">5. Evaluate Assessment Methods of all objectives/skills</td>
<td>• Students use Present Simple structures to tell and ask six personal information questions
• Students can properly use different apps to record videos.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">6. Assessment Results of all objectives/skills</td>
<td colspan="2"></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">Targeted Students Modifications/Accommodations.
• Teachers can pre-record a video explaining how to use the apps.</td>
<td colspan="2">Student/Small Group Modifications/Accommodations</td>
</tr>
</table>

- Teachers can pre-record a video with low-speed pronunciation to help students who struggle on this aspect. - Students can just record the Flipgrid video	- Students are going to work in smalls groups of two or three. - Peer cooperation in the breakout rooms is fundamental to develop the activity
Materials/Technology: www.blooket.com - www.flipgrid.com - www.loom.com	
Reflection on the lesson:	

Appendix B: Lesson Plan 2

Subject: Elon Musk, a significant contributor to world change.	Central Focus: Present simple/Expressions to give an opinion and discuss
Common Core/Essential Standard Objective: Learners have opportunities to interact socially and negotiate meaning.	Date submitted: Date taught:
Daily Lesson Objective: I can participate in live roundtable discussions using Parley I can use expressions to give my opinion, express my thoughts, agree or disagree about Elon Musk's life and ventures. I can use present simple structures to ask questions, describe Elon Musk's life and talk other important people alive.	
21st Century Skills: I can use the technological tool Parley to organize my ideas, express my thoughts, and participate in round table discussions.	Academic Language Demand (Language Function and Vocabulary): • Language functions: Express and support ideas using language target expressions • Verb to Be – Present Simple

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">Prior Knowledge: WH questions, present simple and Parlay prior knowledge.</td></tr>
<tr><th>Activity</th><th>Description of Activities and Setting</th><th>Time</th></tr>
<tr><td>1. Engage</td><td>Foster students to participate in the roundtable by giving their opinion in the following debate, either written or orally: "Do you think that anyone can be a significant contributor to change the world?" Agree/ disagree, why?</td><td>5-10 minutes</td></tr>
<tr><td>2. Explore</td><td>Create a free account at https://go.parlayideas.com/. Go to "Brow Universe" and search for the discussion: *Elon Musk, a significant contributor to world change.* Review the material and questions and ask students to explore them too. Students can take notes in the notepad before "Tap in" and participate in the discussion. Explore students' ideas and make comments if it is necessary. After that, let students "Tap in" to declare their intention of participating in the discussion. Students will appear on their classmates' screen, so they will know their classmate wants to contribute; as the speaker finishes his or her participation, ask them to tap out. Students who want to write their ideas can do it by just typing on the pencil. Read some of the written contributions. Then, go over the quote, "When something is important enough, you do it even if the odds are not in your favor." - Elon Musk. Elicit students' opinion "Tapping in</td><td>12 minutes</td></tr>
</table>

3. Explain	Present the expressions for the discussion image attached to the Parlay lesson. Present the four different types of expressions, making emphasis on the pronunciation. Elicit students' previous knowledge of Elon Musk. Ask them to go over the video. After watching it, go over some of the most relevant information with them. Elicit students to explore the links attached to Elon Musk's ventures.	1-15 minutes
4. Elaborate	Foster students' oral participation in the discussion by choosing one of the following three questions using some expressions practiced previously. Elicit students to develop their ideas in 1 to 2 minutes. *.1. Which of Elon's ventures (Tesla/SolarCity, SpaceX, Neuralink, The Boring Company, OpenAI) do you find most interesting or promising? Why?* *2. What do you think motivates Elon to do what he does?* *3. Do you think Elon Musk is the most important person alive? Explain your thinking. If you do not think so, share an example of someone else you think has made very important contributions to the world.* Remind students how to "Tap in" their new ideas, challenge their classmates' opinions, build on other's ideas, or ask questions using the platform. They can also vote for	25-30nminutes

	someone to elaborate more on his or her opinion or applause others' interventions. Make emphasis on the use of the expressions practiced in class.	
5. Evaluate Assessment Methods of all objectives/skills	• Students use Present Simple structures to present their ideas about Elon Musk and the topics presented through the lesson. • Students can properly use the platform Parley to participate in the discussion. • Students participate orally to present their thoughts on the topic using the platform features.	
6. Assessment Results of all objectives/skills		
Targeted Students Modifications/Accommodations. • Students can write their opinions using the notepad. • Students can make shorter interventions to present their ideas.	Student/Small Group Modifications/Accommodations • Students can listen to their classmates' contributions; they can build on their ideas by writing their opinions on the notepad.	
Materials/Technology: https://go.parlayideas.com/		

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